

## **Country Report on Holocaust Education in Task Force Member Countries**

### **UNITED KINGDOM**

**Date of Issue: March 2006**

#### **Preamble**

The United Kingdom is divided into four education departments, one for each of the four nations England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Each of these countries sets its own educational agenda and Scotland also has its own exam system. However the majority of schools (considerably more than all the others) are in England:

#### Schools in the UK

England (2004)

Primary: 17,762

Secondary: 4,173

Scotland (2003)

Primary: 2,248

Secondary: 386

Wales (2002–2003)

Primary: 1,602

Secondary: 227

Northern Ireland (2002–2003)

Primary: 897

Secondary: 164

Although each of the countries set their own agendas, there are many similarities in each of the countries for all subject areas. The Welsh school curriculum is almost identical to England's whilst in Scotland the difference is mainly in structure not in content. Northern Ireland's entire curriculum is currently under review.

Only England has a prescribed National Curriculum for most subjects.

The majority of this report will therefore refer to the English curriculum, however reference to the other countries will be made when information is available.

In addition, this report does not cover the private school sector, as each school is allowed to set its own school agenda (however the majority of private schools reflect the national curriculum, if only in that it helps structure education towards examination).

#### **Full report following the question guideline:**

##### **1. What official directives from government ministries and/or local authorities**

## **regarding the teaching of the Holocaust exists in your country?**

The Holocaust is a statutory subject in the English National Curriculum for History. It must be taught at Key Stage 3\*, in the topic 'A world study after 1900':

*A world study after 1900*

*(13) A study of some of the significant individuals, events and developments from across the twentieth century, including the two World Wars, the Holocaust, the Cold War, and their impact on Britain, Europe and the wider world. (ref :*

*National Curriculum History)*

\*[The education structure in England is divided into Key Stages

Primary—Key Stage 1: 5 to 7 years of age; Key Stage 2: 8 to 11 years of age;

Secondary—Key Stage 3: 11 to 14 years of age; Key stage 4: 14 to 16 years of age

Post 16 education.]

The Holocaust is not currently statutory in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland, although there is evidence that a number of schools teach it. This will be addressed further below.

Evidence indicates that the Holocaust or aspects of it are addressed in other subjects or at other stages by some schools (see question 7).

## **2. If the Holocaust is not a mandatory subject, what percentage of schools chooses to teach about the Holocaust?**

Not applicable to England

This type of information cannot be collected on Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Anecdotal evidence and applications for school resources on the Holocaust suggest that many schools in the three countries teach about the Holocaust. All three countries have held large ceremonies for Holocaust Memorial Day and have hosted the Anne Frank Exhibition, which works with schools in the area. Further information pertaining to Holocaust Memorial Day is below.

## **3. How is the Holocaust defined?**

There is no set or definitive definition for the Holocaust either within the UK or in UK education.

The Imperial War Museum defines it as follows:

'Under the cover of the Second World War, for the sake of their New Order, the Nazis aimed to destroy all the Jews of Europe. For the first time in history, industrial methods were used for the mass extermination of a whole people. Six million people were murdered, including 1,500,000 children. This event is called the Holocaust.

The Nazis enslaved and murdered millions of other people as well. Gypsies, people with physical and mental disabilities, Poles, Soviet prisoners of war, trade unionists, political opponents, prisoners of conscience, homosexuals, and others were killed in vast numbers.'

For the creation of the Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) Trust, the Home Office Government Department, has created the following definition for the Holocaust:

'...the persecution and mass murder of Jewish people by the Nazis and their accomplices during the period 1933–45 and also the persecution and murder of other groups of people who were the victims of Nazi race policies—including Roma, Sinti, black people, the mentally and physically disabled, homosexuals and many of the Slavic peoples" (Object 1a, HMD Trust)

In schools anecdotal information suggests that the Holocaust is used by some teachers as a very tight definition of the genocide against the Jews but more often it is used widely and loosely to describe the persecution of all the racial and ideological groups, with particular reference usually made to the Jewish victims.

**4. Is the Holocaust taught as a subject in its own right, or as part of a broader topic? Explain the reasoning behind this decision.**

The Holocaust is directed to be taught within the subject of history. This fits into the framework for subject teaching within England.

However aspects of the Holocaust may be addressed in other subjects (religious education (religious studies), English literature, art, science and citizenship) and with a different emphasis.

There is anecdotal evidence to suggest this is also the case in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

**5. At what age(s) do young people learn about the Holocaust in Schools? Do students encounter the Holocaust in schools more than once?**

The official directive in the English National Curriculum for History, is towards the end of the Key Stage 3 level (see footnote i), this is when pupils are in year group 9, which is the equivalent of age 13/14. The Holocaust is also part of many public examinations, e.g., GCSEs (14–16 year olds) and A levels (16–18 year olds).

However, some students begin to explore the Holocaust or at least the *Kindertransport* in year 6, Key Stage 2 (age 10–11), as part of 'Britain and the Second World War'. Also in Key Stage 2, the English National Curriculum requires pupils to read different sources of written work, including diaries, and many schools choose to teach about the life of Anne Frank.

*(Data from the Anne Frank Trust is still to arrive.)*

Since the introduction of Holocaust Memorial Day, primary schools (ages 5 to 11) have been encouraged to address aspects of the Holocaust in year 6 (age 10/11), for that day of national commemoration.

There is anecdotal evidence to suggest this is also the case in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

**6. How many hours are allocated to teaching and learning about the Holocaust in schools?**

There is no statutory number of hours, so this varies across schools and can depend upon the interest and expertise of individual teachers. Some students will have only a single lesson on the Holocaust; others may study it for an entire term. In some cases students will already have learnt about the Holocaust in other subjects before studying it in history. And some may revisit the Holocaust in other subject areas later or if they continue with the study of history to exam level (see above).

**7. In what areas of study (history, literature, sociology, theology) is the Holocaust taught? In each case, briefly outline the rationale for teaching the Holocaust in this particular subject area.**

History—This is addressed in detail in responses to questions 1 and 2, above. In addition, it may also be included in some examination syllabuses.

Each of the following is dependent on the teachers themselves, the rationale is therefore, varied. The age groups that may explore the Holocaust in these subjects is not fixed, it may be anything from ages 10 through to 18.

Literature – through novels and poetry; memoirs and testimony; or letters, diaries and other written documents from the time.

Theology, religious education and religious studies—this is predominantly viewed as a moral and ethical issue, not as one about the Jewish people. In this area pupils may also explore issues of faith, responsibility and ideology as well as the role of evil in the world and questions relating to free will and the existence of God. Some teachers may explore the role of the churches during the Holocaust and under Nazism.

Citizenship—the failure of democracy, human rights education, identities, personal responsibilities, dangers and weaknesses in European culture and in modern society.

Science—this is a relatively new curriculum area to be involved in Holocaust education, but there is evidence that growing numbers of science teachers are interested in how science was distorted and used to legitimise Nazi ideology, the role of scientists in the ‘euthanasia’ programme and in the Holocaust, and what this study might tell young people about the scientific method.

Art, music and drama—some teachers in these subjects also encourage young people to respond creatively to their study of the Holocaust.

Some schools are known to spend a whole day on the Holocaust, teaching it as a cross-curricular subject, but the figures for this are not monitored.

**8. (a) What historical, pedagogical and didactic training is provided to teachers of the Holocaust at either the university level or the professional development level in your country?**

**(b) How many teacher-training sessions are held each year, and how many teachers are involved?**

**(c) What funding is available for training in the teaching of the Holocaust in your country?**

(a) Impossible to answer.

As the Holocaust is part of the National Curriculum for History, most trainee history teachers will have considered how best to teach this subject since the National Curriculum was introduced. However, each teacher training establishment sets its own syllabus with guidelines on skills delivery (lesson plans, requirements, being in the classroom). What historical information is taught is not monitored but, as trainee teachers need to have a first degree in the subject they are training to teach, the delivery of historical content is likely to be a minor aspect of this training; the emphasis is far more on issues such as pedagogy, assessment, and classroom skills.

Information from Nongovernmental Organisations (NGOs) indicates that they take part in a number of events for training teachers around the country, but no overall statistical information is recorded.

(b) Information is not monitored.

(c) The Teacher Training Agency is responsible for overall teacher training: they do not specify any particular funds for teacher training on the Holocaust. Also individual schools and Local Education Authorities (LEAs) have training budgets which they can spend according to their own needs; there is no detailed information available on what training has taken place on the Holocaust.

Note: Many UK universities teach courses on the Holocaust, and many of those who go into the teaching profession will have had the opportunity to study the subject.

**9. Has your country instituted a national Holocaust Memorial Day? If so, in which ways is this day marked and commemorated? What difficulties have you encountered in establishing this day of remembrance in the national consciousness?**

Yes, a Holocaust Memorial Day was announced by Prime Minister Tony Blair in 2000. It is held on January 27, and the first one was in 2001.

The day is marked by a National Event, attended by government figures, Holocaust survivors and others. The National Event has been held in London, Manchester, Edinburgh and Belfast. In 2005, it will be held in London again. Regional and

community events are also encouraged, with hundreds of small groups such as churches, amnesty groups, schools, universities and town councils holding local events for the public and their own communities.

The Home Office provides a 'Local Activities Pack' to help these groups put on an event. For the last five years, all the organisation for the day and funding has come from government, from the Home Office, except the schools' education which is funded by the Department for Education and Skills. Events around the UK are funded either independently by those hosting the events or as part of ongoing budgets, such as in museums.

All four of the countries making up the UK have an event of some sort if they are not hosting the national ceremony.

The Department for Education and Skills produces the schools' education resources. These are materials specifically designed for Holocaust Memorial Day, not for Holocaust education generally, although they are suitable for teaching the Holocaust in history, citizenship and English lessons. The resources also broaden the issues to reflect the wider issues of the day as set out in the HMD aims for the day, which include exploring the issue of contemporary racism and prejudice.

The Scottish Assembly also produces resources for the day for Scottish schools. This has usually taken the direction of using connections to Scotland of those involved with the Holocaust.

Northern Ireland also produced resources for schools when the National Event was held in Belfast.

#### Difficulties in Establishing the Day

There have been very real problems in establishing the day; this should not be confused with the general public's knowledge and general consciousness about the Holocaust.

These problems are not listed in any particular order:

- It was introduced 55 years after the end of the Holocaust—many therefore do not see its relevance.
- The UK perspective on the Second World War is one of opposing Nazism and beating the Axis powers; it does not associate itself directly with either the perpetrators, or as victims.
- Other genocides have happened since that have obscured the uniqueness of the Holocaust in the minds of many.
- Contemporary society has its own pressing problems which need addressing, rather than dwelling on events in the past that may seem remote.
- There is general confusion as to the aims and purpose of the day, which have not always been clear, and the messages have not always reached the right people.
- Many community groups do not see the relevance to themselves.

- There has been some opposition from groups who would want the day to be more inclusive of other genocides.
- There is a general level of apathy present in any western society.

In schools:

- Since the Holocaust is already on the curriculum and taught in other subjects, why have a national remembrance day as well?
- There are many issues of importance for schools—this is just one of many.
- It is often just left to the history teacher rather than being a whole-school event.

Since the original draft of this report, the UK government has established a Holocaust Memorial Day Trust to run and deliver Holocaust Memorial Day. The establishment of a Trust separates the National Day from government control and possible future political agendas. However, the UK continues to support the day fully and currently provides all the funds to support the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust.

**10. Has your country established a national Holocaust memorial and/or museum? What numbers of students visit this memorial/museum each year?**

A Holocaust memorial was instituted in London in Hyde Park in 1983. Created by Richard Seifert, it consists of two boulders set in raked gravel and surrounded by silver birch trees. The inscription reads: ‘For these I weep. Streams of tears flow from my eyes because of the destruction of my people’.

In June 2000, HM Queen Elizabeth II opened the permanent Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum, the UK’s national museum of twentieth-century conflict. Some 25,000 British school students visit the exhibition each year. As well as visiting the exhibition, they all participate in sessions with trained Holocaust educators. Thousands more university students and students from overseas also visit the exhibition each year. Since the exhibition opened, it has had more than 1.3 million visitors.

The Imperial War Museum (which receives government funding) has also created a permanent exhibition called *Crimes against Humanity*, which examines the theme of genocide and ethnic conflict in the twentieth century. This exhibition explores some of the common features shared by the horrendous bloodshed in Armenia, Nazi-occupied Europe, Cambodia, East Timor, Bosnia, Rwanda and elsewhere and the distinctive histories of each.

**11. Please estimate the percentage of students in your country who visit authentic sites, and list three primary sources of funding available in your country for visits to authentic sites.**

The case for the UK is different to the majority of our European partners, in that there are no authentic sites relating to the Holocaust in the UK. The UK was not occupied and remained fighting against Nazi Germany throughout the Second World War. There was a

labour camp at Alderney on the Channel Islands. However, this has not been developed to a sufficient level for students to visit. \Any students wishing to visit a site must travel to another country.

A number of schools and colleges do visit sites abroad (in addition to those organised by NGOs and listed below). The majority of these trips are planned by the school and individual teachers, therefore it is not possible to know precise figures. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that it is less than 100 schools across the UK each year. Far more visit historical exhibitions in the United Kingdom such as those at Beth Shalom, the Jewish Museum, and the Imperial War Museum.

The Holocaust Educational Trust takes groups of teachers and students on two day trips to visit Auschwitz-Birkenau for the day. Over the last six years, 3,200 people have taken part in the trips.

Many schools visit the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam (awaiting figures)

In recent years, schools have also started visiting sites such as the House of the Wannsee Conference (awaiting figures)

In addition, anecdotal information has suggested that some schools visit Holocaust-related sites as part of a wider trip to a European country, e.g., when visiting Germany as part of an exchange.

Also schools visit Holocaust exhibitions in the UK. These are the Imperial War Museum (see question 10) and Beth Shalom and the Jewish Museum.

**12. What are the three major textbooks used in teaching the Holocaust in your country? How many pages do your school textbooks allocate to the Holocaust, and on which aspects do they focus?**

None of the Education departments in the UK select or publish general teaching texts. The choice of resource used to teach any subject is left to the teacher and the school.

A number of the UK's leading publishers in education produce books and resources for the history curriculum; the amount of information and the quality of the information is variable, but not unacceptable.

Since the introduction of Holocaust Memorial Day, additional information has been provided by the Department for Education and Skills, England, and the Scottish National Assembly, specifically for schools. This is addressed in question 9.



Further to the information in textbooks, a number of NGOs also produce education resources for schools, to help them teach about the Holocaust. These organisations are listed at the end of this report.

### **13. What strategies of differentiation are typically used to make the study of the Holocaust accessible to students of different ages and with different learning needs?**

The National Curriculum in England includes skills and levels of ability as an intrinsic part of teaching; it is not possible therefore to answer the question directly.

Differentiation may be achieved both by outcome—where tasks are open ended and may be completed to varying degrees of sophistication—and by input, where different tasks are given to different students or a task common to all is broken down into smaller component parts to make it more accessible to young people of differing abilities and with different learning needs.

Specialist support is sometimes provided for students identified with particular learning needs, and this may vary from a specialist department within the school which gives advice and help to subject staff, or to providing additional staff supporting individual learners within the mainstream classroom, to providing education in specialist schools whose staff are experts in meeting particular learning needs.

Textbooks published by independent publishers are written with a specific Key Stage and age in mind. The information is then assessed by the teachers for suitability for their own classes. Many teachers are extremely creative in their use of resources and develop varied learning activities targeted at the particular needs of their individual students.

The resources produced by the Department for Education and Skills, includes materials suitable for different age groups from Key Stage 2 through to Key Stage 4 and the teacher's notes that accompanies the resources indicates this.

The resources produced by the Scottish Assembly for Holocaust Memorial Day are done so for a similar audience.

Overall, the different NGOs produce resources which are suitable for different ages, different abilities, and emphasising different aspects of the Holocaust. This is done to a high standard.

### **14. How far and in what ways is your country's own national history integrated into the teaching of the Holocaust?**

There is no way of monitoring this. The primary concern is that pupils know what the Holocaust was, how, where and by whom it was carried out and who the victims were. There is also an emphasis on understanding the moral lessons for today. In recent years

with the assistance of Holocaust Memorial Day, more attention has been made to the UK's relationship with the Holocaust.

However the UK's historical position in the Second World War does mean that the relationship is not always as obvious as it is for other countries and this has resulted in this area requiring more work.

### **15. What are the three major obstacles to teaching and learning about the Holocaust in your country?**

Time is an issue for many teachers, but given that the National Curriculum has been slimmed down and teachers now have far more flexibility, this really does not pose the sort of problem that it did when the initial, very content-heavy National Curriculum was first introduced. However, pressures from external sources, such as the need to include other topics, may mean that teachers choose not to spend much time on the Holocaust, especially as there is a perception that plenty of information exists about it elsewhere.

There is clearly a need for more and better teacher training, as some teachers are still unsure about how best to introduce such a sensitive subject into the classroom. There is also confusion as to how to break down the subject and make it approachable for pupils. Some teachers take an instrumentalist approach to the Holocaust, using it to convey their own 'moral lessons' or try to contemporise it too much, thus losing its specificity. It is important to explore the complexities of the history, allowing young people to develop their understanding and to draw their own conclusions about its relevance for today.

The pressure of other issues is a very real problem in teaching the Holocaust in history and in the other subject areas. The question may be raised why the Holocaust and not slavery, or the Commonwealth, for example.

It can be difficult to convince teachers of the importance of the subject and that it deserves and is worthy of significant curriculum time. In some cases, teachers may be reluctant to focus 'too much' on Jewish victims, as they do not recognise importance of the specificity of the Jewish experience. It is essential that the other victim groups are examined, however, not by approaching the whole thing with a simplistic view of trying to be as 'inclusive' as possible. That approach can lead to a blurring of the distinctions between different victims of Nazi persecution, which ultimately undermines messages.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY OVERVIEW**

## **School inspection**

Although schools are regularly monitored and inspected by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education), the purpose of the report and nature in which it is put together does not help in gathering information about how specific topics such as the Holocaust are taught in UK schools.

After reviewing a number of reports including those about schools which are known to spend a great deal of time teaching the Holocaust, no reference was found relating to this issue.

This is due to the style and purpose of the reports.

## **The State of Holocaust Education Overall**

In the last 12 years since the Holocaust became mandatory, there has been a noticeable improvement in how and the extent to which the Holocaust is taught in English schools. Alongside this, the amount of resources that have become available have made a marked difference to quality and approaches.

(This is also the case for the Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.)

Although it is right to remain critical of the level of teaching of the Holocaust and there is no clear way of monitoring what is happening, there are a number of indicators. These are (in no particular order):

Requests for Holocaust Survivors to go into schools

The London Jewish Cultural Centre: more than 150 visits in the academic year 2003–2004, resulting in over 240 talks, reaching more than 14,000 students.

The Holocaust Educational Trust:

Visits to Holocaust exhibitions

(Imperial War Museum, Anne Frank in the World, Beth Shalom, and the Jewish Museum)

The number of schools conferences

Requests to all the organisations for resources

The London Jewish Cultural Centre, 2003–2004 more than 200 requests

The Holocaust Educational Trust, 2003–2004, 260 requests

(For both of these organisations, some of the requests were for joint resources.)

## **The Future**

There is a real concern for the future of Holocaust education once eyewitnesses to the event are no longer present. They currently add insight and reality, as well as a definite

link to that period. Although there are a number of initiatives under way to preserve their experiences for the long term, their age and eventual deaths will leave a gap in the educational process.

There are questions of whether it is still appropriate to emphasise the Holocaust when more recent genocides have occurred are sure to be raised.

There is no threat to the Holocaust's status in the National Curriculum, especially with the arrival of Holocaust Memorial Day. However, the style and symbolism of the Holocaust is likely to alter in future decades.

### **Recent Developments**

In a recent BBC poll published in November, 45% of UK adults (16 years old and above) did not know what Auschwitz was.

It could be argued therefore that, while many teachers do not see a pressing need to teach more and more effectively about the Holocaust, there is clearly much still to be done in raising the levels of knowledge and understanding in the UK. In this sense, the choice made by teachers not to devote much time or resources may be a source of concern.

It is also important to remember that the poll was conducted to support a new documentary about Auschwitz. Its purpose may not be as educative as may first appear.

### **The NGOs**

Finally, there are a number of active NGOs working in this field in the UK. They have contributed hugely to the progress of Holocaust education.

The following are listed alphabetically with their Web site addresses:

Anne Frank Trust	<a href="http://www.annefrank.org.uk">www.annefrank.org.uk</a>
Beth Shalom	<a href="http://www.bethshalom.com">www.bethshalom.com</a>
Council of Christians and Jews	<a href="http://www.ccj.org.uk">www.ccj.org.uk</a>
Holocaust Educational Trust	<a href="http://www.het.org.uk">www.het.org.uk</a>
Holocaust Memorial Day Trust	<a href="http://www.hmd.org.uk">www.hmd.org.uk</a>
Imperial War Museum	<a href="http://www.iwm.org.uk">www.iwm.org.uk</a>
Institute of Contemporary History and the Wiener Library	<a href="http://www.wienerlibrary.co.uk">www.wienerlibrary.co.uk</a>
London Jewish Cultural Centre	<a href="http://www.ljcc.org.uk">www.ljcc.org.uk</a>

The Jewish Museum, London

[www.jewishmuseum.org.uk](http://www.jewishmuseum.org.uk)

Manchester Jewish Museum

[www.manchesterjewishmuseum.com](http://www.manchesterjewishmuseum.com)